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Medusa, Apollo, and the Great Mother

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MEDUSA, APOLLO, AND THE GREAT MOTHER

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I

IN venturing the following interpretation of the Gorgon Medusa I am conscious of running counter to so strong a current of established preconceptions, and of proposing a solution in principle so distasteful to orthodox votaries of the Olympian cult that in propitiation I can but put it in the sequence through which the conclusion forced itself upon me. This conclusion is that Medusa was not an evil demon or bogey, but primarily a nature goddess and earth-spirit of prehistoric times identical with or cognate to the Great Mother, to Rhea, Cybele, Demeter, and the "Mother" Artemis. As a procreative and fertilizing energy embracing the action of light, heat, and water on the earth, she became an embodiment of both the productive and destructive forces of the sun and the atmosphere, an emblem of the sun-disk.

After dominating in pre-Hellenic times, she was given in later times a subordinate part in the Olympian system, entering the service of Zeus and Athene, gods of atmosphere and light. Above all she became the embodiment, after being the mother, of Apollo-Helios without ceasing to be connected with the nature goddesses. Crete, Asia Minor, Sparta, Delphi, Athens, represent stages in the evolution of her plastic type with contributions from Egypt and Western Asia.

Now, the current interpretations resolve themselves into two main groups, — the Euhemeristic and the Physical. Professor Ridgeway<sup>1</sup> believes that the Gorgon was some hideous beast indigenous to the Libyan desert, and that the Gorgoneion on

<sup>1</sup> *J.H.S.* XX, p. xliv; cf. J. E. Harrison, *Proleg. St. Greek Religion*, p. 192.  
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the aegis of Athene was the head of the beast whose skin was worn by the goddess. According to this school the Gorgon is merely a monstrous bogey used as a charm to frighten and to avert evil, and she is primarily a mask for whom a body, a slaying hero, and a myth were afterwards invented. The Physical interpretation, most ably represented by Roscher and Furtwängler,<sup>1</sup> regards the Gorgons as storm demons, atmospheric forces manifesting themselves in the thunder and lightning, which dazzle and terrify. Even when they protect, they do so by the fear they inspire, not by any active power for good. Both schools, then, agree in regarding the Gorgon as an evil demon and as primarily a frightful mask, not a complete figure. Recently my attention was attracted to a number of monuments which did not at all accord with the demonic interpretation, to which I had always yielded unquestioning assent, and their study has led me step by step to a most unexpected and far-reaching conclusion. It must be remembered that while classic literature has but little to say of the Gorgon myth, it was extremely popular in art from the beginning, and that in the form of the Gorgon head it counts its monuments by many thousands over a period of nearly a thousand years. So, archaeologically, the question is important. It had been treated, but not solved; for one cannot call a solution the declaration that a majority of the representations of a theme are a bit of meaningless decoration.

There are, practically, three forms to consider: (1) The full figure of the Gorgon Medusa and of her two sisters, either alone or in the Perseus myth; (2) the head of Medusa, usually called Gorgoneion; (3) the aegis, with its decoration of serpents and Gorgoneion.

It was, in fact, nearly three years ago, while studying the famous bronze candelabrum of Cortona, a late archaic product of Ionian Greek art, that it seemed difficult to explain, on the evil demon hypothesis, the presence of a large Gorgon head in the centre, surrounded by the familiar medley of fighting animals, and then by a wider zone of eight sirens alternating with eight satyrs playing on the double pipes, with a zone of dolphins, one under each of the satyrs. Why was Medusa the main figure on a monumental lamp, associated with these em-

<sup>1</sup> Art. *Gorgones*, in Roscher's *Lex. Gr. Röm. Myth.*; cf. Roscher's *Gorgonen*.

bodiments of earth, air, and water? It was a puzzle to be unravelled some day.<sup>1</sup>

Some months later, in examining the wonderful sardonyx cup at Naples, the "Tazza Farnese," I was struck, for the first time, by a still stranger juxtaposition.<sup>2</sup> The inner face of the cup is filled with a charming idealistic scene; the Fertility of Egypt. Euthenia reclines on a sphinx, while above her Triptolemus, lord of the ploughed field, holds the horn of plenty, as he looks to Father Nile enthroned, and is accompanied by the crop-producing Etesian Winds and the fertilizing Nymphs. On the opposite or under side the entire surface is covered with a Medusa head or Gorgoneion, corresponding in area to the scene just described. What is she doing here? Is it possible that in the Cortona lamp the Gorgon was connected with heat and light and that there was a bond in the artist's mind between her and fertility in this Farnese tazza? In these two masterpieces it will not do to say that Medusa was a mere bit of meaningless decoration. It is, in any case, a good creed not to believe in the aimlessness of antique art. So, I reserved the "Tazza Farnese" for future explanation.

It was an article by Homolle<sup>3</sup> which gave me the first suggestion; not out of sympathy, but from opposition to his views. In publishing long ago the base of the archaic statue of Apollo by Iphicartides, the earliest signed statue, of ca. 600 b.c., he called attention to the fact that of the three corners of this triangular, tripod-like base, one was decorated with a ram's head and the other two with Medusa heads.<sup>4</sup> Homolle expressed surprise at the Gorgon heads, but recalled, what Six had already shown, that in the early coinage of a number of Greek cities, the connection of Medusa and Apollo was undeniable, the two heads sometimes occupying the reverse and obverse of the same coins, sometimes being used as substitutes on corresponding coins. The French savant could suggest no explanation except that of contrast: the opposition of the principles

<sup>1</sup> *Mon. dell' Inst.* III, pls. 41, 42; cf. Weicker, *Der Seelenvogel in d. a. Lit. u. Kunst*, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Furtwangler, *Antike Gemmen*, pls 54, 55.

<sup>3</sup> *B.C.H.* XII, 1888, pp. 463-479; cf. Six, *De Gorgone*.

<sup>4</sup> Other writers speak of *one* Gorgon and *two* rams. I cannot say which statement is correct.

of good (Apollo) and evil (Medusa). This explanation seemed quite contrary to Hellenic usage, which does not select the emblem for a god on this principle. The question of a possible connection between Apollo and the Gorgon, raised in my mind by these archaic monuments, formed a third puzzle, an attempt to solve which led, in 1910–11, to the present study.

At this point I recollect the generally known fact that the Gorgon head appears in the centre of the *triquetrum* in the coinage of Sicily, beginning with Agathocles (317–310 b.c.), and that it was there associated with ears of corn. Now, as Sicily was, ever since Homeric days, regarded as the sacred island of the sun, and as the *triquetrum* here and in Lycia was the emblem of the sun, there seemed no escaping the conclusion that the Gorgon in its centre represented the power of the sun.<sup>1</sup> If, then, there was a connection with Apollo, it was likely to be in his solar aspect. This was confirmed, at a very late date, by certain gems in which the Gorgoneion is placed in the centre of the Zodiac, in place of Helios or Apollo.<sup>2</sup>

What early material was there for the Medusa-Apollo connection apart from the archaic coins and the Iphicartides statue?

**THE GORGON AT DELPHI.**—One naturally looks for material, first of all, at Delphi. On account of the destruction of the temple, this source of reference is meagre. There is, however, an interesting suggestion in the well-known archaic relief in the Louvre, in which Apollo heads a procession, singing the paean. The scene is Delphi, and the temple is represented in the background. The pedimental decoration<sup>3</sup> consists of a Gorgon head flanked by two Tritons, a mere compendium, of course, of the scene supposed to be represented. The relief is certainly modelled after an original not later than 500 b.c. The scene in the pediment which is here epitomized belonged to the archaic temple and may be conjectured to be similar to

<sup>1</sup> *Numism. Chron.* N.S. XIV, pl. VIII, 7, 8; Imhoof-Blumer, pl. B, 23; Hill, *Coins of Anc. Sicily*, pls. XI, 10; XV, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Reinach's *Pierres gravées*: *Gori*, pl. 88<sup>2</sup>; cf. *Orleans Coll.* pl. 127, 97, whose antiquity has been questioned, though unnecessarily. Also Reinach, pl. 100, 35, from Mariette; cf. Gaedecken's *Gorgo*, in Ersch u. Grüber, p. 403.

<sup>3</sup> One-half of the pediment is restored. Frohner, *Cat.*, No. 12; Clarac, *Musée*, pl. 120, 39; cf. Friederichs, *Bausteine*, No. 72.

that recently found at the temple in Corfu, which I shall describe later.

In the temple the two sacred objects were the omphalos and the tripod. In looking for any traces of the Gorgon, the Gorgoneion or the aegis in connection with them, I found quite a mass of curious data, both literary and archaeological. There is, first of all, the much-discussed passage in Euripides' *Ion*, in which to the question, "Does the dwelling of Phoebus really cover the central omphalos of the earth?" *Ion* replies (v. 224): "Ay, decorated with garlands and with the Gorgons 'around it,' or 'on both sides.'" The omphalos actually appears, from the one found in the excavations and from numerous reproductions, to have been covered with a sort of fillet or network, and there were two eagles placed in some relation to it.<sup>1</sup> This net is considered by Miss Harrison to be the aegis referred to in the expression ὁμφαλὸς αἰγαῖος, and she considers the Gorgons of the *Ion* to be the Gorgoneia or goat heads left on the original skins with which the omphalos was covered. This connection of goat-head Gorgoneia with the covering of the omphalos seems to me improbable. I do not believe that either the "garlands" or the "Gorgons" seen by the contemporaries of Euripides around the omphalos were *on* it, but that they were part of a decorative enclosure. The sacred garlands, made of fruits bound to laurel twigs known to be sacred to Apollo, are carved on many monuments of Alexandrian and Roman art, and a Gorgon head was frequently placed in the centre of the curve of each garland. In this way one might, perhaps, reconstruct this decorative *motif* at Delphi.

In regard to the tripod, I will refer only in passing to the custom of late Alexandrian and Roman art to decorate with a Medusa mask each of the three faces. Such a tripod, for example, is one in the Louvre found at Ostia, marked as Apolline by the affronted griffins and dolphins of the upper border and the laurel.<sup>2</sup> A Medusa mask forms the decoration of each face. On archaic tripods it would seem that the Medusa myth appeared, not in the form of the Gorgoneion, but in that of the

<sup>1</sup> *B.S.A.* IX, 211, article by Wace, 'Apollo seated on the Omphalos.' J. E. Harrison in *B.C.H.* XXIV, p. 254. Cf. art. *Pythios*, in Roscher's *Lexikon*.

<sup>2</sup> Fröhner, *Cat.*, No. 90; Clarac, 121, 50.

killing of the Gorgon by Perseus or of the running Medusa. In the famous tripod-vase of early black-figured ware from Tanagra in the Berlin Museum, the entire Gorgon figure is repeated on two of the legs and Perseus appears on the third.<sup>1</sup> One of the archaic Greek bronze tripods illustrated in this JOURNAL (1908, pl. XIII) has Perseus and the Gorgons in the middle register, and the Gorgons in several forms recur in these and other early tripods, such as those illustrated in *Mon. Ant.* 1897 by Savignoni.<sup>2</sup> Of course such ordinary non-ritual tripods need not be regarded as determining the manner in which the Gorgon was used on Apolline tripods.

There is, also, a curious passage in the *Ion* which may seem pertinent. Creusa, in seeking to persuade Ion that he is her son, describes the swaddling clothes she made for him, which were still kept by the priests: "A Gorgon is in the centre web of the garment"—"and it is fringed with serpents like an aegis"—"ancient virgin-labor of my shuttle." Is it a mere coincidence that a Gorgoneion should be the only decoration of the swaddling clothes made for the child of Apollo in the cave of Gorgon-slaying Athene?

The identification of the aegis and its Gorgoneion with a goatskin (and sometimes with a goat head), if correct, would supply another curious link between Medusa and the Apollo of Delphi. There is no doubt that the goat was sacred to him. Pausanias tells<sup>3</sup> of the bronze goat suckling two children of Apollo which was sent to Delphi as an offering by the city of Elyros in Crete; and of the other bronze goat sent by the city of Cleonae because Apollo had rid it of a pestilence after it had sacrificed a goat to the Rising Sun by order of the oracle. The importance of the goat in the Delphic myth is shown by the tradition that the name of the son of the dragon Pytho was *Aἰγάς* and that there were near Delphi a stream (*Aἰγασ*), a mountain, and a plain (*πρεδίον αἰγαῖον*) "of the goat." In fact, a tradition reported by Diodorus credits the discovery of the mantic properties of the Delphic oracle to a flock of goats

<sup>1</sup> A.Z. 1881, taf. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Mon. Ant. Lincei*, VII, 1897, 'Di un bronzetto . . . e di una classe di tripodi greco-orientale,' especially p. 352.

<sup>3</sup> X, 11,<sup>4</sup> and 16,<sup>3</sup>.

who were overcome with frenzy from the fumes and were the cause of the founding of the shrine.

In connection with the goat in the Apollo cult it must be remembered that the relations of Delphi with Crete were of the closest. Notwithstanding a recent attempt to prove that the Cretan worship was derived from the Delphic,<sup>1</sup> it remains probable that the prevalence there of the worship of the Pythian Apollo was simply a case of a return wave in historic times such as we notice, for instance, in the relations of Cyprus with Greece. Primitive Apollo cult of the pre-Delphic age, which centred in Cnossus, has left its clearest traces in the western part of the island. On the coinage of Tylisos the cult statue of Apollo is represented holding in its hand the head of a goat, and the goat appears on coins of Priansus and Polyschenia.<sup>2</sup> It is a question not yet solved by the excavations in Crete, just how the change in the island from the Minoan to the Hellenic culture affected the cults on the island, and how the Apolline worship was grafted on that of the Minoan gods. We shall see quite soon, however, how the Medusa cult fared in Crete under these conditions.

**THE GORGON AT MILETUS.** — The most notable shrine of Apollo in Asia Minor was the Didymaeum near Miletus. When it was partially excavated by the French,<sup>3</sup> it was found that the only figured decoration of the frieze of the temple consisted of a Medusa head placed over the axis of each column. The execution of the frieze is attributed to the Roman completion of the temple and not to the artists of the fourth century. But that the Medusa *motif* was not decorative but significant is shown by the further discovery in the vicinity, though not on the site, of the most important early marble Medusa yet found. It is the corner block of the frieze of a large building, 0.91 m. high, and from its proportions may easily have belonged to the earlier archaic temple of the sixth century destroyed by the Persians. Its style would indicate this. The full figure of Medusa is given, kneeling on one knee, with colossal head, with four wings, and two large snakes on the top of her head, but not mingling with her hair. Her mouth is closed and her

<sup>1</sup> Aly, *Der Kretische Apollokult*. Leipzig, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Aly, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Didymes, Fouilles de 1895 et 1896*, par E. Pontremoli et B. Haussoullier.

tongue does not protrude, nor has she any tusks. She was flanked by two enormous lions, whose forefeet alone remain, with one mutilated head and breast. They connect her with the Great Mother and the so-called Persian Artemis. The importance of this will shortly appear.<sup>1</sup>

**THE GORGON AT CORCYRA.** — A large archaic Doric temple has recently been excavated in Corfu, at the ancient Coreyra. It is reported to have been identified as a temple of Apollo, but there seems as yet no proof of this.<sup>2</sup> Its date is shortly before or after 600 b.c. The sculptures of the western pediment, of which the larger portion have been found, take a special place in this study. The central figure, of much larger size than the rest, is Medusa, represented as resting on her right knee. Her enormous round face has wide-open mouth with protruding tongue and teeth exposed, and is encircled by snakes that frame the face between the ears. Below each ear a large bearded snake projects horizontally in front of a row of four long twisted curls that fall on the breast. She wears a short Doric chiton bound at the waist by a belt of two twisted snakes who rear their heads and curving necks heraldically, while behind her waist-line appear the coils of two snakes which may belong to the two snakes that project over her shoulders. She has four wings: a pair of upcurving wings with short feathers and a pair of wide-spreading drooping wings with long feathers. Her heavily muscled legs are shod with winged shoes. Both arms are outstretched to embrace her two offspring, Pegasus and Chrysaor. Pegasus, on her right, springs toward her, resting his forepaws on her forearm, while her arm goes around his

<sup>1</sup> The thorough excavations now being carried on at the temple by the Germans under Wiegand will probably furnish a clew to the Gorgon connection.

<sup>2</sup> The modern name of the site is Garitsa. Excavations were begun there in April by the Greek Archaeological Society, in charge of the Ephor Versakis. They were later placed in charge of Professor Dörpfeld and completed at the expense of the German emperor. Brief notices have appeared in the *Tag* (Berlin), the London *Times*, and the *Aθῆναι* (Athens) in May, that in the *Tag* containing a very inaccurate restoration of the pedimental sculptures. A note appeared also in the New York *Times* for June 18. Dr. Dörpfeld has had the extreme kindness to send me a photograph of a part of the pediment as restored *in situ*, at Corfu, for my private use only, as publication is reserved for the Greek Ephor. This and his very helpful remarks reached me after the manuscript of this paper was completed. Later I may, perhaps, be allowed to quote from his letter. [See also the item 'Corfu' in the department of 'Archaeological News.']

winged shoulders. Chrysaor, on her left, stands, a strongly muscled man, front face and bust, but legs in profile. Both these children of Medusa are small in proportion, not a quarter of her bulk, and mere appendages. Beyond them, on either side, is an enormous reclining lion, of the same proportions as the Medusa. They are not, as has been suggested, ornamental, but are evidently animals sacred to Medusa and brought into juxtaposition with her and not with the intervening figures of Pegasus and Chrysaor. Medusa is conceived here, therefore, as the Great Mother, as both a serpent goddess and a mistress of beasts. She is the mother of Pegasus and Chrysaor as a living goddess and not as a beheaded mortal. Beyond the lions on either side are very small figures representing the conflict of the gods and giants. On the right, Zeus with thunderbolt is overcoming a giant; on the left, a giant lies dead in the angle, and there is in front of him an altar behind a seated female figure. But these two ends are too fragmentary for satisfactory explanation, except to recall the connection made in Greek legend between Medusa and the fight between the gods and giants. One fact is certain, Medusa occupies the centre as a great goddess, as Athene does, for example, in the temple at Aegina. The lions show that she was the equivalent of the Cybele, Artemis or Great Mother, who is accompanied by or holds lions or birds. The subject, as represented in the Didyma Medusa, is thus filled out in detail so that there can be no question that in both cases we have a Medusa. In my next paper I shall have more to say of the offspring of Medusa, but meanwhile I cannot avoid expressing the belief that the mysterious Chrysaor is none other than the Hellenic Apollo, as I expect to prove. As to the deity to whom the temple was dedicated, considering the equation Artemis = Medusa, this may be a temple of Artemis and not of Apollo. Years ago it was shown that Coreyra had an important temple of Artemis, the Mother Goddess, by the discovery of a large deposit of archaic terra-cotta figurines of the goddess, as the wingless Πότνια θηρῶν, the beast-subduing Mother Goddess.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B.C.H. XV (1891), pp. 1-112. This is the most varied and artistic known series of Artemis = Mother Goddess figurines; they date from the sixth to the fifth centuries.

MEDUSA AND THE MISTRESS OF BIRDS AND BEASTS.—The above conclusions change the situation that has thus far prevailed ; for the Gorgon and the Artemis types have been considered as quite distinct. There are coins, gems, vases, etc., of the seventh, sixth, and fifth centuries, on which a Gorgon, whom for convenience we may call Medusa, is represented with one snake held in both hands, or with two snakes, one in each hand, with two snakes at her belt, or, in the scene of her decapitation, drinking her blood. On the other hand, there is a numerous series during the same period of winged and wingless female figures, holding in either hand an animal (especially a lion) or a bird (especially a swan or goose). Most of these figures have heads in profile ; only a few, like the Cameirus platter with the swans and the Warren gem with the lions, show the front face of the Gorgon type. Even in these cases it did not appear certain that we should recognize a Medusa rather than some related Gorgon-like spirit, because in neither case were there serpents either in her hair or at her waist. Therefore no attempt had been made to connect the Medusa with the Mistress of Wild Things, as Miss Harrison calls her.<sup>1</sup> Even the Didyma Medusa with her lions does not appear to have given the necessary clew. Now, however, the Coreyra Medusa connects her definitively with the Great Mother, and the important matter is to ascertain just what the relationship is and means, and what bearing the Artemis connection has on the Apollo connection.

MEDUSA IN CRETE, AND THE SNAKE GODDESS.—It is recognized that Asia Minor and the islands received and continued to reflect the Minoan civilization for several centuries after its destruction in Crete. The close and early connection of Crete with Phrygia, Lydia, and the Hittites is also an acquired fact. Here was the origin of the Apollo cult ; here, also, was the development, if not the origin, of the Artemis cult. So, it is not surprising that further explanation should come to us from the recent excavations in Crete, which have

<sup>1</sup> For list and illustrations of the Goddess of the Beasts and Birds, see, for the winged type, Radet, *Cybèle* ; cf. Thompson, *J.H.S.* 1909, p. 286. J. E. Harrison, *Proleg. Greek Relig.* p. 194, has a glimpse of the truth, much distorted, and Radet seems to suspect it.

disclosed a continuous civilization beginning at the neolithic age.

There seems to be no doubt that the splendid Minoan civilization had the nature goddesses as supreme deities, and that the supremacy of male gods was a revolution gradually effected by the conquering Hellenes. Whether it was one goddess presented under different aspects, or several distinct goddesses, is not yet absolutely certain ; but the evidence seems to be in favor of a single earth or nature goddess, the Great Mother.



FIGURE 1.—SNAKE GODDESS OF PALACE-SHRINE AT CNOSSUS.

Mr. Evans presents her as the prototype of Rhea, Cybele, Persephone, Artemis, and the rest of the nature goddesses. She appears mainly under three aspects : as the mountain and lion goddess ; as the snake goddess ; as the dove or bird goddess.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Evans, *Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult*, and especially *B.S.A.* IX (1902-3), pp. 59, 74-87 ; cf. VII (1900-1), p. 29 ; VIII (1901-2), p. 28, and X (1903-4), pp. 222-223 ; Milani, *Studi e materiali*, III, pp. 126-129.

In all three aspects she bears upon the Medusa question. Among the most interesting and artistic objects discovered by Mr. Evans at Cnossus are some porcelain or faïence figurines and other votive objects belonging evidently to the shrine of a Mother-Snake-Goddess. They at once became famous as unique both in theme and in artistic form. The goddess (Fig. 1) herself has a high tiara or *polos*, a richly embroidered, short-sleeved jacket, and laced bodice that leaves the prominent bosom bare, and a long hoop-skirt, with a short, apron-like overskirt. Her face, with wide-open eyes, is framed in the coils of two serpents. One of these serpents is held in her two outstretched hands ; its tail resting in her left hand, it winds up her arm



FIGURE 2.—VOTARY OF THE CRETAN SNAKE GODDESS.

over her shoulder, descending behind to follow the outlines of back and hips, ascending again symmetrically, passing over shoulder and arm to have its head rest in the left hand. With its tail coiled about the goddess's right ear, the second snake descends, framing neck and bosom and waist, crossing the waist, coils down the front of the apron, and ascending, is knotted at the waist, where its head is reared in the centre. A third snake, with its tail entwined in the snake girdle, ascends symmetrically on the opposite side, twists about the left ear, mounts the tiara, and rears its head on top of it like an Egyptian *uraeus*. The snakes are green spotted with purple brown, and the details of the goddess are purple brown, purple, or black. With this figure were found parts of two others, apparently priestesses of the goddess (Fig. 2), with flounced instead of hoop skirts, and without any snakes except the two small snakes which they brandish, one in each raised and outstretched hand, in the per-

formance of a ritual dance. Their bosoms also are bare, with low, V-shaped bodices; and their long hair is left to fall, loose, to the hips. There were also a number of votive dresses of similar type, which helped in the restoration of the figures. Of course the snake-goddess is a personification of the fertile earth in its sub-soil aspect, which we are apt to call chthonic.<sup>1</sup>

In her other form of mountain and lion goddess, or goddess of the life on the earth, the earth-goddess is represented frequently holding or accosted by lions. The most complete form is on a seal from Cnossus (Fig. 3), where the goddess stands, with lance extended, on the summit of a mountain,—the prototype of Athene Promachos and Acrisia,—

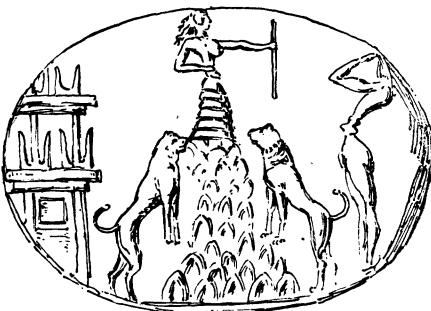


FIGURE 3.—CRETAN MOUNTAIN MOTHER.



(a)



(b)

FIGURE 4.—(a) THERAN ARTEMIS AND (b) CRETAN GODDESS.

while the two heraldic lions rise from its base.<sup>2</sup> In the form not of an image to be worshipped but as a goddess in action, she appears with one lion in an attitude so similar to the Artemis on a vase from Thera that I give them side by side (Fig.

4) as showing how the islands continued Cretan traditions centuries after the fall of Minoan power.<sup>3</sup>

In the excavations at Palaikastro (Heleia), also in Crete, a group of rather crude ritual objects came to light, which evi-

<sup>1</sup> *B.S.A.* IX, pp. 74 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *B.S.A.* VII, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> *B.S.A.* IX, p. 59, and Radet, *Cybébé*, p. 12, with references.

dently belonged to a shrine of the snake goddess,<sup>1</sup> and which supplement the more artistic Cnossian statuettes. Here, also, is the goddess with her votaries; and the three votaries are represented as performing a circular ritual dance, with arms extended, so that they touch each other around the goddess. The goddess stretches her arms forward, holding in both hands a striped snake.<sup>2</sup> The figures have the typical crinoline skirt. The most interesting feature of the find is that besides the figures there were several doves; three of which may have stood on votive pillars, and one on the head of the goddess herself. These sacred doves, forming the most important feature of the shrine after the figures themselves, indicate the essential unity of the snake goddess with the dove goddess.

It remains now to see whether the connection between Medusa and the Mother Goddess, suggested by the Corcyra pediment, can really be dated back from the sixth or seventh centuries in Asia Minor to this Cretan prototype, so many centuries earlier. The main two elements, the snakes and the lions, certainly characterize both, but the artistic form of the Gorgon is so absolutely different from the Cretan prototype that it requires more than this analogy to give us the certitude that, in the ancient mind, the two were identical or even closely affiliated. Crete itself seems to furnish this necessary proof.

Many centuries later than the objects just described, after Minoan culture had vanished, when the Eteocretans dominated at Praesus, the Dorians at Heleia, and when male gods, especially Apollo and Zeus, had been set at the head of the Pantheon, Palaikastro furnished an interesting example of the substitution of the independent worship of Zeus Dictaeus for that of the Earth Mother, also connecting with her the concept of the Gorgon Medusa.<sup>3</sup> The temple was first built in the sixth century, and rebuilt or restored at various later dates. To the early date belongs an antefix formed of a Gorgoneion with six snakes, three on each side, quite unconnected with the hair. It is of the type with open mouth, four tusks, and extended

<sup>1</sup> The discovery of the Snake goddess on other sites, at Gournia and Prinias, shows that she is a generic Cretan divinity.

<sup>2</sup> *B.S.A.* X, p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> *B.S.A.* XI (1904-5), pp. 303-305; cf. X, p. 223.

tongue (Fig. 5 *a*). This antefix does not differ essentially from other archaic Gorgoneia with serpents, and, taken by itself, we should have no reason to regard it as proving any connection between Medusa and the Cretan goddess. But, when the temple was restored at a later date, another form of antefix appeared which is of the greatest value in this study. It furnishes quite a new type, that of the beautiful Medusa (Fig. 5 *b*). It gives her a body robed in a Doric chiton, and so is not a Gorgoneion. She is represented on the antefix to below the waist, and there are four snakes; two she holds in her hands and two spring from behind her shoulders. There are no snakes connected with the hair, which is carefully and rigidly arranged, not at all in the way common at any time in the usual Hellenic types. The mouth is open and the tongue protrudes, but no teeth are indicated. This type was not a "freak," but we may be allowed to believe it a normal one in Hellenic Crete of the fifth or fourth century B.C., because antefixes of exactly the same type have been found at Praesus in a temple also thought to be that of the Dictaean Zeus. It is interesting that on early coins of Praesus the Gorgoneion occupies the obverse.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bosanquet thinks, especially in view of the numerous votive lions found here, that the worship of the Mother Goddess was preserved by the Dorians by the side of that of her son; the relationship between the male and female deities of the Minoan age being merely reversed. What is important is this: that the figure and head recognized as that of the Gorgon is identified by the Cretans with the old snake goddess, and this carries the same consequence for the archaic Gorgoneion, and if for it, then why not for



FIGURE 5.—ANTEFICES OF  
PALAIKASTRO AND PRAEUS.

<sup>1</sup> W. Wroth, *Brit. Mus. Cat. of Greek Coins of Crete*, etc., p. 70.

the entire Gorgon tribe in Greek art? In the Crete of that time it would seem, therefore, as if Medusa and Artemis were one, and were the same as the old mother snake goddess of the Minoans. Not having been subjected, as it was elsewhere, to oriental influences, the Medusa type has not become winged, and yet it has the contamination of the protruding tongue.

**ARTEMIS-MEDUSA IN ASIA MINOR AND UNDER ORIENTAL INFLUENCE.**—Passing now from Crete to Asia Minor, where we are led to believe that the ultimate type of the Medusa was created, we find that the next step is to investigate how, during the centuries that elapsed between the making of the Minoan snake goddess, some time before *ca.* 1600 B.C. and the period of the earliest Asia Minor or Laconian figures of Artemis and Medusa in the seventh century, the addition of the wings took place as well as the various other changes, the sum of which constituted the normal Gorgon types. We judge, mainly from gem cuttings, that down to its close, Mycenaean art had not given wings to its figures of the Mistress of Wild Things, the earth mother. This would bring us to about 800 B.C.

In the first place, the Cretan type of snake goddess was known in Asia Minor. This is shown by the bronze statuette from the Troad now in Berlin<sup>1</sup> with similar costume, snake belt, snakes on arms and on top of head, nude breasts, etc. The art is Mycenaean, and there are no wings. Now the Mother Goddess in her aspect of queen of the animal kingdom appears to have been the dominant divinity of a large part of Asia Minor. In Lydia, at Sardis, she was called Kybebe; in Phrygia she was the better known Cybele; in Ionian Ephesus she was Artemis. Works of the eighth to the sixth century from these regions, and particularly from Smyrna, Dorylaeum, Cameirus, Rhodes, Thera, etc., show her with two (or sometimes four) wings of the oriental upturned type, usually holding in each hand a lion by the tail, or else a waterfowl.<sup>2</sup> Then comes a mass of such figures in vases, bronzes, jewellery, and terra-cottas of the islands and the mainland, dating from the seventh and sixth centuries, showing how universal was

<sup>1</sup> Perrot and Chipiez, VI, Figs. 349, 350; Furtwängler, *Aegina*, p. 371, Fig. 296.

<sup>2</sup> Radet, *Cybēbē*; Thompson, in *J.H.S.* 1909; and Studniczka, *Kyrene*.

the spread of the cult and its representations. Among them all there is one that stands out as a typical connecting link between the entire group and the Cretan goddess; it is a decorative group on the handle of a bronze vase found at Graeck-wyl which favors Evans' hypothesis of the unity of the Cretan goddess (Fig. 6). In this bronze the lion-goddess, the snake-goddess, and the dove-goddess are all one person.<sup>1</sup> She is winged, showing the Hittite contamination, and her hair is in the Egyptian style. The prominence and nudity of her bosom is a thoroughly Cretan

trait. She wears a small *polos*, on the summit of which is perched a bird, probably a dove. From the back of her head, there project, on either side, almost horizontally, two enormous bearded snakes, on whose backs rest two young lions. The goddess holds by each hand a hare, and two large lions raise one paw to rest it

against each of the goddess's hips. She is the perfect type of an animal tamer giving a performance. The date of this extraordinarily interesting piece is thought to be the sixth century. There is not, however, a trace of the Medusa type in the figure of the goddess, who varies from the Cretan mainly in her costume.

If this bronze is a perfect archaic survival of the Cretan goddess, there is a Hittite seal in the De Clercq collection<sup>2</sup> which will show this type transformed under Asiatic influence into the proto-Medusa form. In this elaborate scene the Gorgon-Artemis has four wings and rests on the backs of two winged fabulous animals that stand tail to tail. They have lions' bodies, but curious horned and bearded heads, which seemed



FIGURE 6.—FROM THE GRAECKWYL BRONZE VASE.

<sup>1</sup> Radet, *Cybébé*, p. 29, and Bertrand, *Arch. Celt. et Gaul.* 2d ed. Fig. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Ménant, *Cat. de la Coll. De Clercq*, pl. XXXIII, No. 357. Ménant has not recognized as such the heads of the bearded snakes.

to Ménant to resemble goat heads. The goddess holds two winged animals head down, with bodies like tigers or panthers and with human heads. From each side of the goddess's head two bearded snakes spring almost horizontally. The goddess herself has the round, staring, Gorgon type, so far as it could be given on so small a scale. As we shall see, it is from such Hittite concepts that several of the Gorgon traits are derived.

These two examples will be for the present sufficient to connect the Cretan goddess with different phases of early work in Asia Minor. We may now examine the Anatolian products as a whole.

There were three main sources from which, directly or indirectly, by contamination with cognate mythological figures, the Artemis and Medusa types could have been transformed or evolved: Egyptian, Hittite, and Assyrian. Babylonian art during the eighth and seventh centuries was moribund; Persian art had not yet arisen. It is especially among the seals, cylinders, and ivories that the material can be found. The following points are important for the Medusa type: (1) the added wings; (2) the round face; (3) the protruding tongue; (4) the beard; (5) the standing attitude, with legs in profile, one being advanced and often uncovered; (6) the kneeling attitude, with one knee on the ground; (7) the running attitude, with knees slightly bent; (8) the attitude with one or both arms raised above the head, assumed sometimes both by the standing and the kneeling figures. In considering these points it must be remembered that while we have found, previous to 1500 B.C., the existence of a snake goddess and a mistress of beasts, whose plastic forms were afterwards assumed by Medusa, we have not yet discovered the existence before *ca.* 700 B.C. of a separate plastic representation of Medusa as distinct from these goddesses. It is the disentangling from the goddess of her material forces which results in the creation of the plastic Medusa type, after *ca.* 800 B.C.

In looking for the prototypes, the first question is as to the source of the upcurving wings which became characteristic of Artemis and Medusa. A glance at the plates of the De Clercq collection of oriental cylinders—a typical collection—shows,

as do also such Hittite rock reliefs as that of Eflatun Bunar,<sup>1</sup> that this form of upcurving wing is peculiarly Hittite and not Egyptian or Assyrian. The attitude with one exposed leg, so characteristic of the earliest known Greek Medusa-Artemis, on the Cameirus plate (seventh century), appears in Hittite figures like the caryatids of the sun-disk (Fig. 7), at Eflatun Bunar, where we see also the full, round face and the raised arms. The Gorgon-like face of the Hittite Mother Goddess in the De Clercq seal has already been noticed.

There is also an Assyrian seal cylinder with Egyptian contamination, which is interesting to notice because it has in the centre the figure of Bes, the Egyptian counterpart of the archaic Medusa. Its two raised hands under the winged disk hold flowers and do not actually support the disk, this being done by two caryatids of pure bearded Assyrian type.<sup>2</sup> After even a cursory examination of the Hittite-Assyrian material, one is driven to the conclusion that the figures of types cognate to Medusa-Artemis were connected almost exclusively with sun worship when not confined to that of the earth goddess. There is great variety in the Assyrian material. An ivory from Nimrud in the British Museum gives the type of a wingless mistress of beasts holding the lions that may date before 800 B.C., but of the winged type there is no trace. On the other hand, the conflict of Marduk and Tiamat furnishes several winged types: such as Marduk attacking the female monster with a sickle, like that often given to Perseus; a hero or winged god kneeling on one knee and subduing one or two winged animals; a similar figure standing and holding one or two animals or birds by the tail or leg. In almost every case there is on the same work a winged sun-disk alone or with adorers or supported by one or more caryatid figures.<sup>3</sup> The earliest of these works seem to date from the ninth century. Evidently the functions

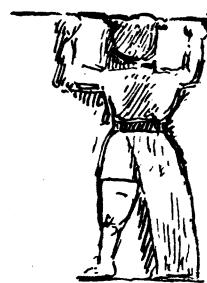


FIGURE 7.—HITTITE  
ROCK-SCULPTURE,  
EFLATUN BUNAR.

<sup>1</sup> A.J.A. 1886, pl. I.

<sup>2</sup> Furtwängler, *Antike Gemmen*, pl. I, 12.

<sup>3</sup> See Ward, *Oriental Seals and Cylinders*, and the *Cat. de la Coll. De Clercq*, passim. Consult Furtwängler, *Antike Gemmen*, esp. pl. I.

assigned to male figures in oriental art were in this case assigned by proto-Hellenic and Hellenic thought to female personifications. This contamination of male and female types may explain the curious male and bearded Gorgon which is so frequent in the archaic period and evidently grew up outside both of the nature-goddess sphere and of the Perseus saga.

In this connection an important rôle is played by Bes.<sup>1</sup> In the transformation of the Medusa idea from earth-force to sun-force it is probable that the Bes contamination was important. This foreign god, introduced into Egypt at some unknown date, furnishes the exact counterpart of the Cretan goddess, because he was a sun-god, a snake-god and a beast-king, as well as a chthonic deity. He was this, however, only as an embodiment of the higher and more spiritual divine beings representing these ideas. That is, he embodied the force of the sun-god Horus, etc. He was a sun-carrier, a sun-caryatid, a sun-embodiment. In this function he performs precisely the part I have assigned in the Hellenic sphere to Medusa; and his late appearance as a separate plastic figure in Egypt corresponds exactly to the late appearance of the plastic type of Medusa long after the Medusa idea had existed. The diffidence shown by archaeologists in acknowledging the evident plastic connection between Bes and Medusa will certainly vanish as soon as their basal concept is seen to be absolutely identical. Only the sex differs. Nothing could more delightfully express this correlation than two scarabs apparently of Phoenician workmanship,<sup>2</sup> in one of which Bes is holding the Gorgon head above his head, while in the other the Gorgon is holding the head of Bes! They were evidently considered interchangeable symbols! The question will be discussed later whether the protruding tongue also came to Medusa from Bes.

The earliest Gorgon leg attitude, as shown on the Cameirus plate (Fig. 8) was the same as that of the Hittite sun-caryatids as shown in the Eflatun Bunar relief; that is, with one leg ex-

<sup>1</sup> An excellent summary is given in the article *Bes*, in Roscher's *Lexikon*. The scepticism as to the dependence of certain features of the Gorgon type on the Bes type, shown by Six, *De Gorgone*, is not based on valid reasoning and is largely due to his misconception of the Gorgon.

<sup>2</sup> Furtwängler, *Antike Gemmen*, pl. XV, 67 and 69; cf. 72.

tended and uncovered. It appears, with even closer dependence on Hittite models, in such works as the Theban aryballus at Oxford (Fig. 9). The other part of the Hittite attitude—the raised arms—appears in other early Gorgons, *e.g.* the Perugia bronze handle and the so-called “Anubis” bucchero vase at Chiusi. But very soon the wingless, motionless caryatid scheme was replaced by the winged type both motionless and in motion, with knee bent, the attitude made famous by the so-called Nike of Archermos. The attempt to call this kneeling attitude the normal archaic mode of representing the act of flying is perhaps questionable in its initial stages. But it would be perfectly normal for the running or flying caryatid; that is, for the figure moving under a superimposed weight such as the sun-disk. This is what Medusa seems to have become: the moving sun-caryatid, as she was also the mother-goddess caryatid. The Assyrian and other oriental seals and cylinders show that this conception was a common one both in attitude and function. Even when perfectly immovable, as an object of adoration, in the way she appears on the Corcyra pediment, she preserves this kneeling attitude.



FIGURE 9.—ARTEMIS ON ARYBALLUS AT OXFORD.

There were, of course, several stages in the process of assimilation of oriental and Egyptian traits under the influence of sun worship, by which the Gorgon Medusa passed from being mainly a fecundity goddess, an alias of the Mother Goddess, with a solar connection added to the central idea; to the second stage of being primarily



FIGURE 8.—GORGON AS MOTHER-GODDESS, ON CAMEIRUS PLATE, BRITISH MUSEUM.

a sun-spirit, associated with the Mother Goddess, as embodying the fecundating and destructive effects of the sun. The Cameirus plate of the seventh century, already cited, illustrates the first stage, in which Medusa holds the birds of the Mother Goddess and shows little trace of sun worship. The archaic bronze Perugia vase handle in Munich<sup>1</sup> represents a slightly later stage, even though the figure is not winged, with the crouching Bes-like Medusa holding two lions by the neck, but not associated with snakes. A middle stage in which the two elements are evenly balanced is illustrated by the Corcyra pediments. In the Selinus metope the Mother Goddess has disappeared and the solar element has triumphed, though here Medusa and Pegasus are both wingless. This is one of many proofs that both winged and wingless types existed at the same time; as we shall find that the snake and the snakeless types and the closed and open-mouth types coexisted. A classification of the monuments in my next paper will suggest how racial and local traditions more than age produced these differences. The consideration of Medusa as sun-carrier has brought us at last to the Gorgoneion.

THE GORGONEION AND ARTEMIS ORTHIA.—Of course the most crucial question of all is: When and why did the idea of

beheading the Medusa arise,—of transforming into a mere head this composite Nature and Sun Spirit? For contrary to many critics, I find it no longer possible to deny, with the evidence just given, that the whole figure preceded the head. In order to answer this question, we must first see what was the form, and hence the meaning, of the head. All critics recognize that it was circular, but none appear to have concluded that it was the sun disk itself. This,



FIGURE 10.—MEDUSA AS THE  
SUN-DISK. ARCHAIC VASE  
FROM CORNETO.

however, is susceptible of proof. In a large archaic urn (Fig. 10) from Corneto, belonging to the Blacas collection,<sup>2</sup> there is

<sup>1</sup> Levezow, *Ueber die Entwicklung des Gorgonen-Ideals*, pl. I, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pl. II, 21.

a carefully drawn Medusa head inscribed in a circle, and this circle is enclosed in a narrow yellow nimbus from which radiate twenty-eight snakes. Now it must be noted that the snakes are separated from the head around the entire circumference by this golden nimbus, intended evidently to represent the edge of the sun disk. The detachment of the head from the nimbus, which is here only partial, is made complete in the head of an archaic cylix in Philadelphia,<sup>1</sup> where the hair, as well as the face, is disconnected. This arrangement of the snakes in a complete circle around the Gorgon head is a common archaic form; the snakes representing, of course, the sun's rays. The sun-disk idea seems to have been continuous, appearing as late as the age of the Antonines in the medallion that encloses the Gorgoneion.

Now there is an insignificant little lead offering found in the excavations of the Artemision at Sparta (Fig. 11), which would appear to be a connecting link between the Gorgoneion, as the sun-disk, and the entire Gorgon, as the sun-carrier or caryatid.<sup>2</sup> In this piece the face of the Gorgon is inscribed in an absolute geometrical circle, with heavy raised border, to which the primitive, almost acrolithic body seems a mere appendage. From the body snakes radiate. The arms are raised high along the globular head in the caryatid attitude, and from the head springs the head and bust of some deity, too minute for identification. On its right a lance and on its left a snake (?) spring also from the Gorgon head. Here, then, is the transitional stage. The little lead figurine may date from the seventh century B.C., and probably the find contained many like it. It is only one of many indications that in this Laconian sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, the Gorgon (and the Gorgoneion) was the principal emblem of the goddess. It was probably, then, shortly before the seventh century that the idea of the separate Gorgon head occurred, and that the sun-carrier was transformed into the



FIGURE 11.—LEAD FIGURINE FROM SPARTA.

<sup>1</sup> In the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> *B.S.A.* XIV, p. 24, Fig. 9.

material emblem of the sun-disk. This would give the earliest date at which the conception of the aegis with the Gorgon's head could have been used in Greek literature. The descriptions of the aegis in the *Iliad* might then have been written in the eighth, or possibly as early as the ninth, century, but hardly before. The birth of Athena from the head of Zeus was probably a male adaptation of a Mother-Goddess myth, as here illustrated. Proof of this appears in such works as the primitive marble idol in Carlsruhe, in which a tiny figure is perched on the head of the mother, evidently the child.<sup>1</sup>

The little leaden Medusas were not by any means the only Medusa material furnished by these excavations of the British School in the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta, with its wealth of votive objects of the eighth, seventh, and early sixth centuries.<sup>2</sup> In fact, they give for the Greek mainland the almost exact Doric counterpart of the Cretan nature goddess, with the changes and additions which the type underwent after being subjected in Asia Minor to Egyptian, Hittite, and Oriental contamination. Artemis Orthia has the uncovered breasts. She has the lions. She appears sometimes wingless and sometimes winged. She is associated with the horse, the water-birds, the snake, the griffin, the dove, etc. She has apparently a male bearded counterpart, as was the case in Crete, and, as in that case, it appears to be Zeus. Her worship also furnishes the final proof of the connection between Artemis and Medusa. In one plaque she is accompanied by a large snake, and snakes abound on the vase-paintings. Among the ritual objects a very large number have the Gorgoneion. This is the case with the plates, the drinking cups, and the vases, where the Gorgoneion continually appears as the central *motif*, in such a way as to have shown the excavators themselves that there was a ritual connection. Finally, the Perseus myth was adopted and represented on an ivory fibula-plaque, ascribed to the early sixth century. Artemis Orthia appears as one of the most primitive figures in Hellenic mythology up to the present illustrated by numerous finds. She is distinctly a nature and fertility god-

<sup>1</sup> Perrot and Chipiez, VI, p. 740, Fig. 332.

<sup>2</sup> See the *B.S.A.* beginning in Vol. XII; cf. M. S. Thompson, 'The Asiatic or Winged Artemis,' in *J.H.S.* 1909, p. 286.

dess, and a phallic deity. When the closeness of the relations between Sparta and Crete are considered, the religious affinity seems natural. It must have been established at a very early date. The second most important relationship of Sparta, that with Delphi, would explain the solar element, in case that were not thought to have been an oriental contamination. It is not too much to say that the finds here prove that *the Gorgon was the principal embodiment of Artemis Orthia*, who was the counterpart both of the Cretan and the Anatolian goddesses, and this harmonizes with all the previous indications. It is important to note that as these Spartan types appear to have been formed as early as the eighth century, they antedate anything yet discovered in Asia Minor or the islands, except Crete.

MEDUSA, ARTEMIS, AND THE HORSE.—Before the constitution of the orthodox Medusa and Gorgoneion, there seem to have



FIGURE 12.—PERSEUS AND MEDUSA ON AN ARCHAIC BOEOTIAN VASE.

been other attempts at embodying the material energy of the nature goddess. I shall note merely one form, the horse, because it enters into the classic Medusa myth and survived in the form of Pegasus. It is hardly necessary to refer to the fact that in ancient myth the horse was an important solar emblem and that the centaurs are quite commonly considered as personifications of the solar rays and as children of Apollo and Hebe, etc.

One of the rare large early Boeotian amphorae with reliefs, published by De Ridder,<sup>1</sup> has, as main decoration on the neck, Perseus killing Medusa (Fig. 12). To a complete female body the artist has attached all but the forequarters of the horse, doing it awkwardly, as the Gorgon is in front view and the horse in profile. Medusa is nude to the waist. She has no



FIGURE 13.—THE MOUNTAIN MOTHER GODDESS.

wings, no snakes, or tusks or protruding tongue; in fact, none of the facial peculiarities, except rotundity of outline, that are connected with the regular archaic type. Evidently, this type represents quite another tradition, perhaps, of Cretan origin.

The upcurving ends of Perseus' shoes suggest, however, Hittite influence. The salamander over Medusa is a solar allusion. A solar emblem is also the long-stemmed lotus or lily. A second vase, also in the Louvre, had the same scene, but it is fragmentary. A third vase of the same series, also found at Thebes, has in the same place the scene of the adoration of the Great Mother by her two votaries flanked by two lions, whose fore paws rest on a hill, showing the goddess to be the mountain goddess, lineal descendant of the Cretan (Fig. 13). In both cases, the body of the vase is decorated with two zones of animals, hinds above and stags below. The association of the goddess with the Hippo-gorgon is evident. There are several small works which show the Gorgon as a Hippo-gorgon at about this time, *i.e.* seventh century. Of two scarabs (Fig. 14), adduced by De Ridder in this connection, the one in which Medusa is holding a lion shows the wings attached to the human shoulders, whereas in the other, where she is holding a wild boar, the wings are attached to the horse. In the first,



FIGURE 14.—SCARABS WITH HIPPO-GORGONS.

<sup>1</sup> *B.C.H.* XXII, 1898, p. 439, pls. IV, V.

six snakes radiate from the head; in the second, there are no snakes. There is nothing resembling the typical Gorgon mask in either. The use of wings shows that, in works contaminated by oriental art and produced either in Asia Minor or the islands, the Hippo-gorgon was current as well as in Boeotia, and, probably also, Arcadia. There is also another interesting instance, the Cameirus electrum necklace<sup>1</sup> of the same period (seventh century). Here two subjects are repeated alternately on the plaques: the "Persian Artemis" and her embodiment the Hippo-gorgon (Fig. 15). Here Artemis is holding the lions and Medusa a hind, and the artist has come closer to nature than in the Boeotian vase.



FIGURE 16.—FRAGMENT FROM SHRINE OF ARTEMIS ORTHIA.

this type is supplemented by figurines, between two horses, of Artemis herself.<sup>2</sup> The earliest stage would figure the Gorgon as all horse (Fig. 17). This is illustrated in early Boeotian ceramics; for instance, in a terra-cotta coffer from Thebes, where the decoration is in the form of two metopal scenes, evidently closely related.<sup>3</sup> In one, the Mother of Beasts holds two birds; in



FIGURE 15.—ARTEMIS AND HIPPO-GORGON, ON CAMEIRUS NECKLACE.

Another mode of association appears in the votive offerings of Artemis Orthia and cognate finds, where the Gorgon head is made to rise from the crotch between two heraldically disposed horses' heads (Fig. 16); and



FIGURE 17.—TERRA-COTTA COFFER FROM THEBES, BERLIN MUSEUM.

<sup>1</sup> Radet, *Cybébé*, Fig. 7; Salzmann, *Nécrop. de Camiros*, pl. I.

<sup>2</sup> J.H.S. 1909, p. 286 ff.; article by M. S. Thompson.

<sup>3</sup> Radet, Fig. 17; cf. examples in J.H.S. 1909, p. 286.

the other is a horse, bridled and stabled, the counterpart of the goddess. Of the numerous horses in works of the Dipylon and geometric styles,<sup>1</sup> a number must be interpreted from the same point of view, but the earliest connection of the horse with the worship of the Mother Goddess is, perhaps, the extraordinary seal impression of Cnossus,<sup>2</sup> which seemed to Evans to commemorate the importing of the horse into Crete from Libya, home of the Gorgon, and also, probably, the source of the Cretan people and civilization. The large-sized horse, bitted and harnessed, stands proudly, a ritual figure, in front of a long vessel, still manned by its rowers. From this germ, perhaps, comes the Boeotian Centauress Medusa, and the scene on black and on red figured vases, etc., in which the slain Medusa is capped with a horse's head, forming a figure like the Demeter of Phigaleia with the horse's head, another *alias* of Medusa as the Chthonic Mother.

This phase of the myth was soon rejected, and is important here not merely on account of the Poseidon and Pegasus connection, but because it had no elements of a "horrible" Medusa head, and furnished good evidence that the horrible or bogey idea is mainly a figment of modern critics based on a few exaggerated or misunderstood expressions in ancient authors. The exact place of the horse in the myth need not be considered here. Its importance would naturally have been emphasized in such naturalistic regions as Arcadia and Boeotia.

We have now come to the end of our preliminary pilgrimage, returning to the Greek mainland with Artemis, after having left it with Apollo. At this point we can take certain premises for granted, and can then proceed in a systematic and historic manner to reconstruct in subsequent papers the entire figure of the Gorgon and the Gorgoneion.

These premises are :

- (1) That there was an early connection with Apollo and the sun.
- (2) That there was an even earlier connection with Artemis in her aspect as Nature and Fertility Goddess, also with other Nature goddesses.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. in *B.C.H.* XXII, p. 274, a Boeotian specimen of Dipylon.

<sup>2</sup> *B.S.A.* XI, p. 13.

(3) That these two ideas were amalgamated and incorporated in the Gorgon at some time later than *ca.* 1000 B.C. and before 600 B.C.

(4) That the Gorgon myth is an early, broad, and important nature myth quite different from the usual conception of it, and that its plastic expression included elements taken from Egypt, Crete, the Hittites, Assyria, and primitive Asia Minor.

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